

# The Dream that Made Beautiful Lavallière A Nun

The Most Admired Star of the Parisian Stage Tells How She Saw in a Vision the Luxuries of Her Life and the Miseries of the Poor Contrasted and Heard a Voice from Heaven Telling Her to End These Wickednesses

By Eve Lavallière.

I GO from the lights to the light. I am tired of the world, the stage with its hectic rush, its superficiality and its insincerity.

Undoubtedly I have enjoyed my career. It would be idle to say I have not. Princes and statesmen have paid me court, jewels and gifts have been lavished upon me from admirers, many of whom I have never seen. But I know I have not won this tribute—but the glamour which surrounds the life of a woman of the stage.

Perhaps it is well that I make it clear what has induced me to give up the stage at the height of my career and enter upon preparation for my novitiate into the Carmelite Order.

It began with a dream I had. This was in the days before the war. I had come home from the theatre with a number of friends. We were very jolly, much wine was drunk, there was much laughter, much love and many kisses before the party broke up for the night. Day was dawning before I got into bed. I fell asleep at once, for the performance was a heavy one for me and the gaiety also tired me.

At once I began to dream. I saw a picture of the stage, the costly scenery and dresses, the magnificent gowns and jewels of the people in the audience. Then I saw outside of the theatre. It was snowing. There were cold, half-starved little urchins of Paris huddling for shelter against the walls of the house. Old women were selling matches in the gutters, drunken men were slouching into a cabaret nearby.

In a dream one can live through an age and think the thoughts of a lifetime. I thought of all the reckless extravaganzas of which I had been guilty or of which I had been the object. I recalled particular experiences where the expenditures now appeared to me particularly sinful, and I recalled many acts of which I felt deeply ashamed.

My dreaming mind went back to a banquet that had been given one Sunday in my honor at a beautiful resort on the banks of the Seine. The table was entirely decorated with rare lavender-colored orchids for my pleasure. These flowers alone had cost perhaps 10,000 francs. It was the most astonishing extravagance at one dinner that I had ever known, even in my varied experience, and made a deep impression on me at the time.

The young man who gave the banquet exhausted his vast fortune by a series of similar acts and a legal guardian had to be appointed for him.

The banquet lasted all through the warm Summer night and at dawn we were assisted into our automobile and sped back to Paris.

As I was approaching my apartment it seemed that my car ran over an old woman who was too weak to step out of the way. Though dead and crushed she stood up before my car all the way home, not saying a word but just looking at me with reproachful, appealing eyes. She was a poor widow struggling to support a family and had been going to early work when my car ran over her. She was too weak from lack of food to step out of the way. I knew too well that there was an uncountable number of such women.

In my dream the contrasting figures were strangely mixed up. Then from above I heard a deep, sweet rich voice saying:

"Help these people! Do not add to the sins of the world and increase the sufferings of the poor! Do not be a willful parasite of society! Take up your cross!"

I awoke then, feeling perturbed, but fell asleep again. But twice more I dreamed that dream. Each time I awoke and felt more frightened. I could not get the memory off my mind. It haunted me all day and was with me when I went to the theatre in the evening.

And then the most curious thing happened. When on the stage I seemed to recognize the faces of those who were the audience of my dreams, and when I left the theatre I saw the children of my dreams and the old women and the drunken loungers.

Truly, I was worried. I went to a cure who lived near my apartment, and told him my experience. He told me to pray, and that he, too, would pray. I dreamt that dream again, and finally I was convinced that I was called by a divine message to leave my life of vanity and to work for others instead of myself.

During the war I made my definite severance from the stage, but I gave no reason for it, but it was but the first of several steps toward the great change.

I believe heaven sent me that vision in order to prepare me for the change. When the war was declared I was playing in Paris, and at once I determined to throw myself into other work. I threw off my low-cut stage gowns and donned the garb of a nursing sister. I attended the suffering poilus and the brave soldiers of Britain.



"In my dream I saw the throng of my extravagant admirers in the theatre and a poor old beggarwoman and a starving child outside."

Then there was need of help among the poor of Paris. I went back to them because there were then plenty of nurses but few women who could be patient with children. In Paris I learned much of what I had missed in my gay life upon the stage. I found the Holy Mother in those days, and she has guided me ever since.

It has been said that I am taking this step because of disappointment in love. It is not so. I do not like to speak of such things, but it is true that many men have wished me to marry. At one time I so intended to do, but, as is well known, the man I cared for was killed in the fighting in Alsace-Lorraine.

## What Her Decision Costs Her

PARIS, Sept. 20.

EVE LAVALLIÈRE, most typical and charming of Parisian actresses, has abandoned the stage for the convent. She has in fact entered one of the severest of cloistered orders—the Order of Carmelite Nuns.

The announced intention of the noted actress to hide herself from the world has already been reported in this newspaper, but at that time there were, not unnaturally, many persons who could not believe that she would actually carry out this surprising decision.

How could one who enjoyed more luxuries than any woman in Paris submit to the cold severities of the cloister?

How could one who had interpreted the spiciest of Parisian comedies devote the rest of her life to religion?

But the astounding news was really true. And Mlle. Lavallière to-day explains for the first time the reason that led her to take this grave action. Briefly, that reason was a dream in which she saw the misery of the poor contrasted with her luxuries, and which continued to haunt her during her gayest performances. Mlle. Lavallière has now entered the novitiate of the Carmelite Order.

In recent years Eve Lavallière has been considered the foremost comedienne of the Parisian stage. Her position was fully equal to that formerly held by Madame Réjane and equivalent to that of Sarah Bernhardt in another line.

Lavallière leaped into success instantaneously, and from that moment never ceased to enjoy every luxury, to roll in wealth and to have hosts of titled admirers at her feet. Her first great success was in "Le Vieux Marcheur" (The Old Rounder), in which she played an ultra-modern, unscrupulous, decadent, gay, amorous little wife.

She had an original, attractive style of beauty of a rather boyish type. With wonderful skill she handled the most delicate of risky scenes.

The eyes of Lavallière were pronounced the most beautiful possessed by any woman on the Parisian stage, not even excepting those of the late Lucie Lantelme.

To her great range of skill as an actress she added the advantage of being an accomplished stage dancer.

The French newspapers before the war were filled with stories of her luxuries and caprices. Her apartments and houses were adorned with exquisite and costly treasures of ancient and modern art. Her favorite color was lavender and her most

I know it has been suggested that it is because of that I am retiring from the stage. Those who suggest such a thing do not speak the truth. I take the veil because I have heard a voice from heaven calling me.

intimate apartments were decorated in this color. Her splendid motors were upholstered with material of the same tone.

In Paris Lavallière occupied a beautiful, princely apartment overlooking the historic Tuilleries Gardens. A visitor has described finding her there in a bed that had belonged to her namesake, Louise de la Vallière, the earliest favorite of Louis XIV. The modern idol of the boulevards reposed there delightfully propped up with soft piles of delicate lace and cambric pillows, enfolded in a marvelous quilt of old rose, gold and lace.

Lavallière's unusual type of beauty and her ultra-modern, cynical wit excited the interest of the most prominent men of the French capital. Princes, statesmen, European and American millionaires thronged to her salons and laid tribute at her feet.

At a supper given to celebrate her success in "L'Oiseau Blessé," a rising French statesman, who divided his time between the Chamber and the theatre, said:

"I toast Eve Lavallière, the incomparable artist, wit and genius. I drink to the brilliant and beautiful woman, who makes Paris laugh and helps to decide the destinies of her beloved France."

But even in her maddest, gayest moments, even in the midst of the most sumptuous banquets, Eve Lavallière often suffered strange moods of sadness and reflection. When a certain duke noted for his gayeties had paid her a most extravagant compliment she replied:

"Thank you. I wonder how you would treat me if I were poor and unknown."

The war marked a turning point in her life. She plunged herself into her country's cause, and many a French airman found inspiration for his gallant deeds in the smile of Lavallière. Early in the war a group of aviators banded themselves as "Lavallière" men, for the Frenchman loves to fight for an ideal, and six of them won fame.

"The war has altered the tenor of my life," she said. "I have drunk deeply of achievement without finding full satisfaction, and now has come for me the time of meditation."

The famous actress hastened her decision because during the war she lost many dear friends, including one who had touched her capricious affections more than any other. That fact, coupled with the break in her professional career, made her feel that she could never wholly recover the magic of past days. For two years she has been assisting the sick pilgrims to Lourdes to dip themselves in the healing waters of the miraculous grotto.

Consider the luxuries and grottoes of

the past life of this spoiled darling of the Parisian stage and then consider the extreme hardships of the Carmelite nun's existence.

When her novitiate is finally completed she will don a splendid bridal costume of white satin with lace and orange blossoms. In the convent chapel she will say a last good-bye to her friends and then partake of the mass.

In deathlike silence there will be heard the sound of a key in a lock and a bolt withdrawn. The novice will bow to her friends for the last time and step forward. Two nuns will receive her and one will present to her a crucifix which she will kiss. Upon a rough brown cushion the bride must kneel. Beside her are placed the mantle, the scapular and the girdle of the nun's costume.

"What do you demand?" asks the officiating prelate.

"The mercy of God, the poverty of the order and the company of the Sisters," answers the postulant.

"Will you constantly persevere in the order till death?"

"I will."

"Will you observe these things for the love alone of our Lord?"

"Yes, with the grace of God and the prayers of the Sisters."

Then a priest will hand to Eve Lavallière the brown robe, for which she has

given up her worldly joys, and she will pass the grating. The Sisters will lead her to her cell, where she will put aside her wedding dress and put on the brown robe.

At one end of the wide circle is a crown of orange blossoms and laid upon it a wooden cross. She will take up that cross and wear it for the rest of her life.

From the time a Carmelite nun takes the veil until she dies she never exposes her face. She never speaks except when compelled to do so by religious duties. She receives no visitor but death. Even her own mother would not be permitted to visit her.

The Austerity of the Carmelite Nun's Existence Which Eve Lavallière Will Assume for Life in Place of the Luxuries of Her Past Career



Eve Lavallière in Her Beautiful Bed That Belonged to the Historic Mlle. de la Vallière, Favorite of King Louis XIV.